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ABSTRACT

Acquaintance rape has been found to occur with disturbing frequency in an adolescents' social world. Unlike stranger rape, acquaintance rape, particularly dating rape, takes place in the context of normal social activity. In 1978, 432 adolescents, ages 14-18, were interviewed in the Los Angeles area: half male, and half female, and one-third drawn from each of the three major ethnic groups--Blacks, Hispanics, and other Whites. Attitudes toward the opposite sex, sexuality, sex roles, rape, power, and violence, along with behavioral expectations, perceptions and norms about dating were measured, as were sex differences in the acquisition of attitudes and expectations. The results showed that boys and girls possessed different perceptions of what interpersonal cues signaled sexuality, and when, if ever, sexual assault was justified. These differential perceptions pointed to potential conflict between possible dating couples, and were related to views of sexuality, power, sex roles, and rape. Suggestions were made as to possible research and intervention to facilitate positive socialization outcomes.
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Adolescents' Cues and Signals: Sex and Assault

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This paper reports findings on a subset of questions from a large survey which examined aspects of the sexual socialization of adolescents in an attempt to illuminate the high incidence of acquaintance (or non-stranger) rape in this population (Zellman, 1976; Amir, 1971). Non-stranger rape, as contrasted with stranger rape, is that which occurs within the context of normal social interaction between persons who are acquainted with one another. To understand the dynamics of this type of rape, we have examined the dynamics of the larger dating context, particularly expectations which young men and women bring to a dating situation as a result of differing socialization experiences.

Specifically, we hypothesized that some proportion of nonstranger rapes result from differential socialization as to the meaning of cues, such that a male interprets a female's behavior as consensual while a female interprets a male's behavior as coercive. In this paper we will discuss situations and behaviors which boys and girls perceive as signals for sex, plus some circumstances which they report as legitimizing the use of force for sex.

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Method

The full sample consisted of 432 adolescents between 14-18 years of age, equally divided between males and females and the three major ethnic groups in the Los Angeles area--Black, Hispanic, and Anglo. The data reported in this paper are those obtained from the 144 Anglo adolescents (72 males and 72 females).

The sample was obtained through the Youth Employment Service of the Santa Monica Office of the California State Department of Employment. Potential participants were made aware of our study through post-cards and calls from the agency or through friends who had taken the survey. Each adolescent was given both verbal and written explanations of the nature of the study and parental consent was required. All adolescents were interviewed in a private room by a specially trained interviewer of the same sex and ethnicity; respondents were paid \$5 for the approximately 1-1/2 hour session.

Results

Three types of questions will be reported. First, we will discuss questions about heterosexual situations and their cue value for sex. Second, a series of behavioral cues will be examined. Lastly, the circumstances under which force is seen as acceptable will be presented.

Situational Cues

Participants were asked to respond to a list of five things that "a guy and a girl" might do together. For each question, respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (from "definitely" = 1 to "definitely not" = 5) whether the situation provided a signal or cue that either the

male or female target person wanted to have sex. One question was, for example, "If a guy and a girl go to the guy's house alone when there is nobody home, does that mean: The guy wants to have sex? The girl wants to have sex?" The other situations included going to a park or beach at night, going to a party where there were drugs or a party where the couple took drugs, and going somewhere together on meeting for the first time in a public place.

The results are presented in Table 1. A three-factor mixed ANOVA was performed on these data, with sex of subject the between-subjects factor and sex of target person and question the two repeated measures. There was a main effect for sex of subject, $F(1, 142) = 17.36, p < .001$, indicating that male respondents see both male and female target persons as wanting sex more than do female respondents. That is, males tend to perceive the situations as "sexier" than do females ($\bar{X}$ for males = 2.95; females, 3.32). A main effect for sex of target person was also found, $F(1, 142) = 64.23, p < .001$, indicating that both males and females see male targets as wanting sex more than female targets ($\bar{X}$ for male target = 3.05; for female targets, 3.22). Not surprisingly, the various situations were seen quite differently, $F(4, 568) = 44.38, p < .001$. The means in Table 1 have been ordered according to reported sexiness of the situation, ranging from "going to a guy's house alone" (the most cue value for sex) to "meeting for the first time in a public place." This ordering seems to reflect a dimension of appropriateness for sex. A guy's house and a park or beach at night might be seen as most appropriate; a party with drugs present or a party where drugs are taken as somewhat ambiguous; meeting in a public

place and going somewhere is seen as inappropriate. Statistically significant interactions with the question source point to more subtle variations in appropriateness of specific situations.

Behavioral Cues

Eight questions were asked about how a guy and a girl might behave when they were alone together. For each question respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (again from "definitely" = 1 to "definitely not" = 5) whether the situation provided a signal or cue that either the male or female target person wanted to have sex. These behaviors were clustered into three types. Three behaviors--talking a lot about sex, telling someone that he/she is sexy, and telling someone that he/she is good-looking--were grouped together as verbal behaviors. Grouped as physical behaviors were playing with the other person's hair, tickling/wrestling with the other person, and continually looking at him/her or in his/her eyes. Lastly, telling someone that you love him/her or that he/she is understanding were combined as romantic verbal behaviors.

The results are presented in Table 2. A three-factor mixed ANOVA revealed much the same pattern of results as was obtained for the situational cues. Male respondents saw all three types of behaviors as more indicative of sex ($\bar{X}$ for males = 2.40; for females, 2.47), and all respondents perceived male targets as more interested in sex than female targets ($\bar{X}$ for male target = 2.27; for female, 2.59). The main effect for question type, $F(2,284) = 50.34$, $p < .001$, establishes a strong difference between the three types of behaviors in their cue value for sex. Verbal cues were seen as most potent, followed by physical and romantic-verbal respectively.

The meaning of these effects is tempered by the finding of a three-way interaction between sex of subject, sex of target, and question type, $F(2, 284) = 4.69, p < .01$. It appears that male respondents do not differentiate between male and female use of the three types of behaviors, whereas female respondents do. An inspection of the cell means (Table 2) reveals that the only behavior which females perceive as being equally "sexy" for both targets is physical behavior, while both verbal and romantic-verbal behaviors are seen as more suggestive of sex when used by male than by female targets. Moreover, when female respondents are talking about female targets they see love (romantic-verbal behaviors) and sex (physical behaviors) as different from each other, a distinction they do not make about males.

Force Questions

Thus far we have examined types of situations and behaviors that can be seen as signals for sex. A more important question, however, is which cues are perceived as a signal that the female has forfeited her right to say no to sexual intercourse. We asked respondents: "Under what circumstances is it OK for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse?" Eighty-two percent of the males and of the females responded that there were never any circumstances under which the use of force was OK. However, when respondents were given a series of specific circumstances to respond to, many of them changed their judgments. Nine circumstances were presented, including items such as "the girl has led the guy on" or "the couple have dated a long time" (see Table 3). For each, the respondent indicated on a 5-point scale how acceptable was the

use of force. Those who responded that force was definitely not acceptable in any of these circumstances were compared with those who said anything else. The percentage saying never to all the force items now decreased to an alarming 34%. A significantly larger percentage of females (44%) as compared to males (24%) rejected the use of force across all nine circumstances, χ^2 (1 df) = 5.58, $p < .02$.

When the circumstances are rank ordered according to their overall mean acceptance scores, force is seen as most acceptable "when a girl gets a guy sexually excited," and least acceptable "when a guy spends a lot of money on a girl." A rank order correlation of +.93 revealed that males and females rank these circumstances in very similar ways.

A principal components factor analysis confirmed that the force items were measuring the same concept, so subject responses were summed across items to provide an index of overall acceptance of force. The correlation between this force acceptance score and chronological age, measured in months, was essentially zero, suggesting that for this relatively restricted age-range, more than the simple biological age is required to tap developmental changes in attitude on this question.

DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that male and female adolescents do have divergent expectations about some aspects of heterosexual interaction which influence their perceptions and opinions. Despite research which shows a decline in the double standard (Reiss, 1967) and an increase in the rates of premarital intercourse for females (Chilman, 1979), it appears that things have not really changed all that much for this new generation of

teenagers. The males in our sample still see the world as "sexier" than do the females. Moreover, both males and females still feel that males are more interested than females in having sex. Both verbal and nonverbal (physical) behaviors, as well as situational cues, appear to be interpreted in accordance with stereotypic notions about sex roles. These findings are consistent with LaPlante et al.'s (1979) work which shows that young people still adhere to a "sexual script" in which the male is expected to be the aggressor and the female is expected to be the pacesetter. Thus although we do see sex differences in levels, there seems to be overall acceptance of the same old stereotyped relationships.

The fact that males and females attribute different meanings to the same behaviors and contexts is particularly disturbing in light of our finding that adolescents seem relatively accepting of forced sex in certain circumstances. A likely scenario involves a young man's interpreting a young woman's behavior as indicative of sexual intent or perhaps even a tacit agreement to sexual intercourse; whereas, the young woman is unaware of this ostensible contract and acts accordingly. In such a conflict, our findings suggest, there may well be a resolution through the use of force. The stage seems set for nonstranger rape.

Table 1

Situational Cues

(Means are for 5-point scale; low score indicates more interest in sex.)

SubjectQuestion

<u>Question</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Target</u>	F	M	F		M
guy's house alone		2.86	2.49	2.63	2.26	2.56
park/beach at night		3.07	2.86	2.69	2.57	2.80
take drugs together		3.68	3.58	3.18	3.13	3.39
party with drugs/alcohol		3.81	3.71	3.10	3.01	3.41
meet for first time in public place		3.83	3.53	3.56	3.36	3.60
Total		3.41	3.23	3.03	2.87	

ANOVA

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Subject Sex	1	17.36	.001
Target Sex	1	64.23	.001
Question	4	44.38	.001
SQ	4	2.33	.06
TQ	4	6.74	.001

Error df for S and T = 142; for Q, SQ, and TQ = 568.

Table 2

Behavioral Cues

(Means are for 5-point scale; low score indicates cue for sex.)

<u>Question Type</u>	<u>Subject</u>				<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Target</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>		
		<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	
Verbal		2.38	2.29	2.06	2.01	2.18
Physical		2.63	2.68	2.19	2.20	2.42
Romantic Verbal		2.94	2.63	2.60	2.58	2.69
	<u>Total</u>	2.65	2.53	2.28	2.26	

ANOVA

<u>Source</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>
Subject Sex	1	10.29	.001
Target Sex	1	3.87	.05
Question Type	2	50.34	.001
SQ	2	3.32	.05
TQ	2	6.25	.01
STQ	2	4.69	.01

Error df for S and T = 142; for Q, SQ, TQ, and STQ = 284

Table 3

Force Questions: Is It OK to Force Sex?

(Entries are percentage responding "No" in each instance)

<u>Item</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>
He spends a lot of money on her	88%	61%
He's so turned on he can't stop	79	64
She's had sexual intercourse with other guys	82	61
She is stoned or drunk	82	61
She lets him touch her above the waist	72	61
She says she's going to have sex with him then changes her mind	69	46
They have dated a long time	68	57
She's led him on	73	46
She gets him sexually excited	58	49

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